it would leave, the official shouted, "Hurry! There it is." It was yesterday's train, just twenty-four hours late! Other public services—postal, telegraph, and telephone—were in a similar state.

Prices were soaring; the purchasing power of the lira shrank to less than one fourth. The Socialists in parliament bitterly denounced the greed of the ruling classes. The workers demanded higher wages. A wave of strikes rolled through the country, most of them spontaneous, unauthorized by the unions. Many walkouts were accompanied by street demonstrations, inflammatory speeches, occasional violence. More often than not the strikers went back to work under the previous conditions, cursing their leaders. After each unsuccessful walkout, the newspapers reported that union cards were thrown into the gutters. One governmental crisis followed another, and each new government was weaker than the preceding. In the summer of 1920, Giolitti, the great elder statesman, succeeded Nitti, but the political situation remained as precarious as before.

As the strikes became more and more violent, bands of Mussolini's Black Shirts appeared on the scene as volunteer strikebreakers and vigilantes. I saw them at work during a streetcar strike in Rome. This wildcat walkout had caused considerable discomfort to the public, and the latter had no sympathy with the workers. The Fascist papers called on patriotic Italians to put an end to the strike. The government called on loyal citizens to maintain order. The streets were full of excited crowds. Impromptu meetings were held at corners, before governmental and Fascist posters. Along the main street I saw a procession led by two police officers in glittering uniforms, with red feathers on their hats. The procession consisted of some eighty or a hundred men, mostly captive uniformed streetcar motormen, surrounded by a cordon of youths in Fascist black shirts and flanked by small groups of other black-shirted youngsters, shouting, "Long live Italy! Long live Mussolini!" Some of them carried sticks.

People on the sidewalks greeted the procession by raising their arms in a Fascist salute. Then two men who stood next to me jumped to the middle of the street, broke through the black-shirted convoy, and slapped the prisoners' faces. A few others from the opposite sidewalk followed their example. The procession halted. The prisoners did not defend themselves but only screamed and cursed. The crowd shouted, "Long live the King! Death to the traitors!" The next day the strikers had returned to work.

Late in the summer, the metalworkers walked out in Milan. The management responded with a lockout in all the iron and steel mills in that area. The strikers occupied the mills to keep the strikebreakers away. Then the manufacturers closed all the metal mills in Italy. The workers seized more plants. The Socialist leaders were disturbed